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APPLICATION OF HEREK'S ATTITUDES TOWARD LESBIANS AND GAY MEN SCALE IN THE NETHERLANDS¹

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Summary.—A national sample of 921 respondents from the Dutch population completed the translated, slightly modified version of Herek's Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale, originally developed in the USA for the assessment of attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. The present study was the first attempt to test the applicability of the scale in the Netherlands. In line with previous American findings, all scale items loaded highly on one factor. The scores also correlated with another measure of attitudes toward lesbians and gay men, namely, 'denial of equal rights' ($r = .76$), and with 'traditional view of women' ($r = .48$), 'importance of traditional marriage' ($r = .53$), and 'authoritarianism' ($r = .31$). Data support the scale's acceptable reliability and construct and discriminant validity.

Little research has been done on attitudes of the Dutch people toward lesbians and gay men (Van den Akker, Halman, & de Moor, 1993; Widmer, Treas, & Newcomb, 1998; Social and Cultural Planning Office, 2000). A review of prior studies has shown that often just a single item was used to assess this attitude. Most of the research conducted focused on attitudes toward equal rights for homosexual couples, which is clearly not the same as attitudes toward lesbians and gay men (see Van de Meerendonk & Scheepers, in press). In addition, in none of the reviewed surveys attitudes toward lesbians were assessed separately from those toward gay men, and none were psychometrically sound, so we decided, with Dr. Herek's concurrence, to apply Herek's widely used Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (1994), the first time it was used in the Netherlands.

In much prior research it was assumed that attitudes toward lesbians would be the same as attitudes toward gay men. Terminology such as attitudes toward 'homosexuality' or 'homosexuals', which sounds gender-neutral was used. When homosexuality or homosexuals are mentioned (Black & Stevenson, 1984), people often only think of male homosexuality or gay men. But there is evidence that there is a difference in attitudes toward lesbians and attitudes toward gay men. For example, especially men tend to adopt a significantly more negative attitude toward gay men than toward lesbians (Herek, 1988, 2000; LaMar & Kite, 1998; Herek & Capitanio, 1999). By

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using separate scales as Herek has provided to measure these attitudes, it should be possible to test this assumption.

Attitudes toward lesbians and gay men are multidimensional (Herek, 1984; LaMar & Kite, 1998). LaMar and Kite (1998) empirically (by factor analysis) distinguished four dimensions of attitudes toward lesbians and gay men: tolerance/condemnation, morality, contact, and stereotypes. The Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale was designed to measure the tolerance–condemnation dimension of attitudes toward lesbians and gay men (Herek, 1984). This dimension concerns personal positive or negative affect toward homosexuality and lesbians and gay men as a group. The items constituting the scale "... corresponded to the personal and cultural attitudes popularly termed homophobia" (Herek, 1994, p. 208).

Herek (1984, 1988, 1994, 1998) has shown that the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale is psychometrically sound for assessing heterosexuals' affective attitudes toward lesbians and gay men in the United States. An important issue is whether the scale is an appropriate measure for the Netherlands, as this country differs significantly from the USA in at least two respects. First, there is a great difference concerning the legal situation of homosexuality for both lesbians and gay men (Van de Meerendonk & Scheepers, in press).² Contrary to the Netherlands, in certain states of the USA private, consenting homosexual behavior is against the law. In the Netherlands marriage is legally defined to include same-sex couples. Dutch legislation also offers homosexuals better protection against discrimination than American legislation. Thus, from a legal standpoint, homosexuals appear to be more accepted in the Netherlands than in the USA. Second, public opinion about the morality of homosexuality for lesbians and gay men in the Netherlands differs from that in the USA where a clear majority of the population view sexual relations between two adults of the same sex always or almost always wrong, whereas in the Netherlands a clear majority do not (Halman & De Moor, 1993; ISSP, 2000; Kelley, 2001). As for equal rights, a majority of the American population is against the possibility of civil marriage for same-sex couples. In the Netherlands, opposition comprises a minority (Eisinga, Coenders, Felling, Te Grotenhuis, Oomens, & Scheepers, 2002).³ According to the 2000 Report of the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Office (2000), internationally the Netherlands is one of the fore-

²Maxwell, N. G. (2000) Opening civil marriage to same-gender couples: a Netherlands-United States comparison. *Electronic Journal of Comparative Law*, 4.3. Retrieved April 23, 2001, from the World Wide Web: <http://law.kub.nl/ejcl/43/art43-1.html>; Maxwell, N. G., Mattijssen, M. A. M., & Smith, C. (1999) Legal protection for all the children: Dutch-American comparison of lesbian and gay parent adoptions. *Electronic Journal of Comparative Law*, 3.1. Retrieved April 23, 2001, from the World Wide Web: <http://law.kub.nl/ejcl/31/art31-2.html>.

³Gallup. (2002) *Poll topics and trends, homosexual relations*. Retrieved February 12, 2002, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/topics/homosexual.asp>.

most countries in granting equal rights and in adopting favorable attitudes toward homosexuality.

The hypotheses concerning the use of Herek's scale in the Netherlands are that the scale is unidimensional and the internal consistency is sufficiently high (H_1). Scores on the total scale are positively correlated with another measure of attitudes toward lesbians and gay men (H_2). Total scores on Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men are positively correlated with theoretically relevant constructs such as 'traditional view of women', 'importance of traditional marriage', and 'authoritarianism' (H_3). Sociodemographic groups who scored relatively high on negative affect toward lesbians and gay men using Herek's scale in the USA will also score relatively high on negative affect in the Netherlands (H_4). Given a much more tolerant attitude about the morality of homosexuality than in the USA, a Dutch sample will score systematically higher on positive affect toward lesbians and gay men (H_5). Lesbians and gay men will score significantly higher on positive affect toward lesbians and gay men than heterosexual women and men (H_6).

METHOD

The Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale

This scale is comprised of two subscales, Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Attitudes Toward Gay men. In this study the short forms of the two scales were used (Herek, 1994, 1998; Schellenberg, Hirt, & Sears, 1999), each having five items to measure attitudes toward lesbians and toward gay men, respectively. See Table 1 for the wording of the statements. The items were translated from English into Dutch (Dutch translation can be obtained through the author). The responses to the Likert-type statements used anchors of 1: strongly agree and 5: strongly disagree.

Small adjustments to the content of some of the items had to be made for two reasons. Firstly, some items did not fit the Dutch situation, i.e., the item about loosening state laws regulating private, consenting lesbian behavior was not appropriate in the Netherlands because there are no such regulations. Secondly, as some of the wording of the items was rather extreme, we decided to use slightly less negative wording in some of the statements, e.g., 'sick' was replaced by 'abnormal', 'disgust' by 'disapprove'. Since the alterations were only minor, we are of the opinion that the Dutch version is still comparable to the American version(s).

Independent Variables

In our study we used several variables to assess the validity of the Dutch version. The scale, 'Denial of equal rights' (summated rating scale; standardized $\alpha = .87$), was measured by four items: homosexual couples must have the same rights as heterosexual couples (1) to acquire housing, (2) to

adopt children, (3) to inherit from each other, (4) to marry each other. 'Traditional view of women' was measured (summated rating scale; standardized $\alpha = .69$) using four items: (1) women are better at raising small children than men; (2) good education is less important for a girl than for a boy; (3) boys can be brought up more freely than girls; (4) it is unnatural for women to manage men in a business. Four items were used to measure 'Importance of traditional marriage' (summated rating scale; standardized $\alpha = .85$): (1) if you do not marry you miss a lot in life; (2) only if you are married, do you have someone you can always rely on; (3) marriage is the most unique bond people can have in life; (4) when you are married, you have someone whom you can trust completely. 'Authoritarianism' (summated rating scale; standardized $\alpha = .69$) was measured by three items: (1) our social problems would be solved if we could get rid of immoral and dishonest people; (2) what we need are fewer laws and institutions and more brave, indefatigable, and faithful leaders whom people can trust; (3) there are two types of people, strong and weak.

The independent variables used in the analyses were sex, age, denomination, church attendance, political preference, education, and subjective social class identification. Respondents were asked in what year they were born. We then constructed six age categories by subtracting this year from the year in which the survey was held. Another question addressed the respondents' present religious affiliation, measured as none, Roman Catholic, Netherlands Reformed Church, Rereformed Churches in the Netherlands, and other Christian churches. The Netherlands Reformed Church and the Rereformed Churches in the Netherlands are both Protestant churches. In addition, respondents were requested to indicate how often they attended church: seldom or never, once or twice a year, once a month, and once a week or more often. Political preference was measured by asking which national political party the respondent would vote for if parliamentary elections were held today. We classified the answers from left to right on the left-right continuum into socialists, green left (Groen Links), social democrats, left-wing liberals, Christian democrats, right-wing liberals, and fundamentalist right, and additional categories of don't know and don't vote. As the measure of education we employed the highest level attained by the respondent, ranging from vocational training (low) to university degrees (high). Subjective social class was measured by asking the respondents to which social class they considered themselves to belong, varying from working class to upper class.

Subjects

In our study we used data from the national survey, 'Social and Cultural Developments in the Netherlands, 2000' by the University of Nijmegen (Eisinga, *et al.*, 2002), which can be obtained through the Steinmetz Ar-

chive, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. In this survey 1,008 respondents were interviewed in the Autumn of 2000. After the oral interview, they were each given a questionnaire to fill in later. All items of the full scale were included in this written questionnaire, which was returned by 921 respondents. After using list-wise deletion of missing values, we had 816 respondents for the total scale, 852 for the Attitudes Toward Lesbians subscale, and 826 for the Attitudes Toward Gay men subscale. The survey covered a representative sample of the Dutch population with respect to sex, age, and marital status.

RESULTS

Factor Analysis and Internal Consistency

The first question to be answered was whether the total scale and its subscales possess a unidimensional factor structure as intended. The items of each scale were factor analyzed separately. In all three analyses, we found a one-factor solution with high factor loadings for all the items (see Table 1).

The total scale and both subscales had high internal consistency (see Table 1), which ranged from .88 to .94 and are comparable or even higher than those reported earlier (Herek & Glunt, 1993; Herek, 1994). These results confirm Hypothesis 1.

Scale Construction and Scores

After having evaluated the unidimensionality and the internal consistency, we constructed the total scale and two subscales using Herek's method of summated rating of the item scores in Likert-format (Herek, 1994). For exact item scores and item means see Table 1. Subsequently, we reversed the scores (1=5, 4=2, 3=3, 2=4, 5=1) of eight of the 10 items (all but L3 and G4) and summed the numerical values across items for each subscale. With our 5-point responses, total scale scores can range from 10 (extremely positive attitude) to 50 (extremely negative attitude), with a value of 30 being a neutral attitude, and with subscale scores each ranging from 5 to 25 (upper part Table 2). A high score indicates a negative attitude toward lesbians and gay men.

Validity

Construct validity was established by looking at the association between the total scale and its subscales on the one side and several other concepts and variables on the other side. We also compared the Dutch and American scores on the total scale. First, the correlations between the total scales and another measure of attitudes toward lesbians and gay men were strongly correlated (.76) with attitudes toward equal rights for lesbians and gay men (Table 2). This result confirmed our second hypothesis.

Then, we studied the correlation between the total scale scores and concepts which related strongly to total scale scores in the USA. Herek

TABLE 1
ITEM FACTOR LOADINGS AND RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS FOR ATTITUDES TOWARD LESBIANS AND GAY MEN (ATLG) SCALE AND
ATTITUDES TOWARD LESBIANS (ATL) AND ATTITUDES TOWARD GAY MEN (ATG) ITEM SCORES (%) AND ITEM MEANS

Statements	ATL	ATG	ATLG	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total N	M	SD
L1 Lesbian sexuality just does not fit in our society	.86		.90	3.9	5.0	14.1	49.8	27.2	887	3.9	1.0
L2 Sex between two women is not natural	.82		.84	6.1	15.1	21.8	38.4	18.6	887	3.5	1.1
L3 Lesbian sexuality is not a problem for me	-.67		-.63	16.7	51.9	14.9	11.3	5.2	886	2.4	1.1
L4 Sex between two lesbian women is disgusting	.86		.80	5.4	8.8	16.4	43.7	25.7	890	3.8	1.1
L5 Lesbian women are abnormal	.79		.80	2.7	4.5	12.1	55.2	25.5	902	4.0	.9
G1 I disapprove of male homosexuality		.86	.86	3.9	5.3	11.1	50.1	29.5	898	4.0	1.0
G2 Homosexual men are just not real men		.73	.73	3.2	7.5	14.5	49.6	25.1	895	3.9	1.0
G3 Sex between two men is just plain wrong		.89	.89	5.5	7.4	16.1	45.3	25.7	894	3.8	1.1
G4 Male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in men		-.57	-.55	5.2	26.9	29.9	28.4	9.7	849	3.1	1.1
G5 Male homosexuality goes against human nature		.79	.81	5.2	15.5	23.9	39.7	15.7	879	3.5	1.1
Variance Explained, %	62.10	64.20	60.40								
Standardized coefficient <i>alpha</i>	.90	.88	.94								
Total N	852	826	816								

Note.—Extraction method was principal axis factoring. The item factor loadings were obtained from separate factor analysis of each scale. Source: data from Eisinga, *et al.* (2002), authors' calculations.

(1987, 1988, 1994; Herek & Capitanio, 1999) and others (Newman, 1989; Haddock & Zanna, 1998; Basow & Johnson, 2000; Whitley & Lee, 2000) showed that scales of affective attitudes toward lesbians and gay men, such as the present total scale and its subscales, were consistently correlated with other theoretically relevant constructs such as traditional 'gender-role attitudes', 'importance of traditional marriage', and 'authoritarianism'. Our study also showed moderate to strong correlation between the total scale scores on the one hand and ratings on 'traditional view of women', 'importance of traditional marriage', and 'authoritarianism', on the other hand (lower part of Table 2), thereby confirming our third hypothesis.

TABLE 2
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR ATTITUDES TOWARD LESBIANS AND GAY MEN SUBSCALES
AND BIVARIATE CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SUBSCALES AND THEORETICALLY RELATED CONCEPTS

	Attitude Subscale		
	Lesbians	Gay Men	Total
Potential range	5-25	5-25	10-50
<i>M</i>	11.2	12.00	23.1
<i>SD</i>	4.3	4.3	8.3
Valid <i>n</i>	852	826	816
Denial of equal rights	.73	.72	.76
Traditional view of women	.42	.48	.48
Importance of traditional marriage	.52	.51	.53
Authoritarianism	.30	.30	.31

Note.—All correlations were significant ($p = .01$, 2-tailed). Source: data from Eisinga, *et al.* (2002); authors' calculations.

Following this, research with the American total scale showed that people were more likely to adopt negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men if they are male, older, denominational member, frequent churchgoers, politically conservative, less educated, and lower class (Herek, 1984, 1987, 1988, 1994). We expected to find similar results with the Dutch total scale scores and its subscales. These expectations (Table 3) are supported to a large extent by the mean scores for the demographic groups. *Post hoc* comparisons of means showed significant differences between the means of the categories within the demographic variables. A deviation from our expectations was that the 25- to 34-yr. age group held most positive attitudes toward lesbians and gay men rather than the youngest age group (ages 18-24 years). These results largely confirmed the fourth hypothesis.

Subsequently, we compared the Dutch and American scores on the total scale. As Dutch are typically more tolerant about the moral acceptability of homosexuality than are Americans, the Dutch were expected to have a more positive attitude than Americans. The mean Dutch scores (see Table 2) were indeed substantially lower than the mean American scores for all three scales as reported by Herek (1988, 1994). Herek (1994, p. 215) used the 5-

TABLE 3
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS ON ATTITUDES TOWARD LESBIANS AND GAY MEN SUBSCALES
AS A FUNCTION OF SEX, AGE, DENOMINATION, CHURCH ATTENDANCE, POLITICAL
PREFERENCE, EDUCATION, AND SUBJECTIVE SOCIAL CLASS

	%	Lesbians Subscale (<i>n</i> = 852)		Gay Men Subscale (<i>n</i> = 826)		Total (<i>n</i> = 816)	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sex							
Men ^a	48.6	11.6		12.8		24.4	
Women ^b	51.4	10.8		11.2		22.0	
Age, yr.							
18–24 ^c	9.3	11.0		12.4		23.6	
25–34 ^d	18.2	10.3 ^{gh}		11.3		21.4 ^{gh}	
35–44 ^e	24.7	11.0 ^h		11.8		22.7	
45–54 ^f	26.0	10.8 ^{gh}		11.6		22.5 ^h	
55–64 ^g	15.8	12.4 ^{df}		12.8		25.2 ^d	
65–70 ^h	6.0	13.5 ^{def}		13.4		27.0 ^{df}	
Religion							
None ⁱ	57.0	9.7 ^{iklm}		10.6 ^{iklm}		20.3 ^{iklm}	
Roman Catholic ^j	21.9	12.0 ^{iklm}		12.6 ^{ilm}		24.7 ^{ilm}	
Reformed ^k	8.2	13.7 ^{ij}		13.9 ^{im}		27.7 ^{im}	
Rereformed ^l	6.6	14.1 ^{ij}		14.8 ^{ij}		28.9 ^{ij}	
Other ^m	6.2	15.8 ^{ij}		16.6 ^{ijk}		32.2 ^{ijk}	
Church attendance							
No, seldom/never ⁿ	51.3	9.9 ^{oq}		10.8 ^{oq}		20.7 ^{oq}	
Yes, once or twice a year ^o	27.6	11.0 ^{nq}		11.8 ^{nq}		22.9 ^{nq}	
Yes, about once a month ^p	7.3	11.0 ^q		12.1 ^q		23.2 ^q	
Yes, about once a week ^q	13.8	16.2 ^{nop}		16.7 ^{nop}		32.8 ^{nop}	
Political Preference							
Socialist ^r	5.0	10.0 ^{vx}		11.2 ^x		21.3 ^x	
Green left ^s	10.8	8.9 ^{vxz}		9.3 ^{rvwxz}		18.1 ^{rvwxz}	
Social democrat ^t	19.7	10.2 ^{vxz}		10.8 ^{svxz}		20.9 ^{svxz}	
Left-wing liberal ^u	8.0	9.8 ^{vxz}		10.9 ^{vxz}		20.8 ^{vxz}	
Christian democrat ^v	15.0	12.9 ^{rstuwx}		13.3 ^{stux}		26.2 ^{stuw}	
Right-wing liberal ^w	18.8	10.5 ^{vx}		11.8 ^{sx}		22.4 ^{svx}	
Fundamentalist right ^x	4.4	20.1 ^{rstuvwyz}		20.2 ^{rstuvwyz}		40.5 ^{rstuvwyz}	
Don't know ^y	11.4	10.8 ^{vx}		11.7 ^x		22.5 ^x	
Don't vote ^z	6.8	12.9 ^{stux}		13.7 ^{stux}		26.6 ^{stux}	
Education							
Low ^{aa}	20.0	12.9 ^{cc,dd}		13.5 ^{cc,dd}		26.3 ^{cc,dd}	
Low middle ^{bb}	36.6	11.7 ^{cc,dd}		12.5 ^{cc,dd}		24.3 ^{cd,dd}	
High middle ^{cc}	13.3	10.7 ^{aa,bb}		11.7 ^{aa,bb}		22.6 ^{aa,bb}	
High ^{dd}	30.2	9.7 ^{aa,bb}		10.5 ^{aa,bb}		20.1 ^{aa,bb}	
Subjective Social Class							
Working class ^{ee}	9.1	11.9		12.8		24.7	
Lower middle class ^{ff}	32.7	12.1 ^{gg}		12.8 ^{gg}		24.9 ^{gg}	
Upper middle class ^{gg}	52.3	10.6 ^{ff}		11.4 ^{ff}		22.0 ^{ff}	
Upper class ^{hh}	5.9	10.4		11.5		22.0	

Note.—Separate Scheffé procedures were performed in the *post hoc* comparisons of means. Superior letters in column 1 refer to the letters used for indicating significant mean differences ($p = .05$). For example, the Attitude Toward Lesbians for the age category 25–34 is significantly different from that of both the 55–64 (g) and the 65–70 (h) categories. Source: data from Eisenga, et al. (2002); authors' calculations.

item Attitude Toward Gay men with three response alternatives (agree, neutral, disagree). To compare Herek's and our findings, we had to recalculate our scale scores combining categories 'strongly agree' and 'agree' into one category with a value of 2 and 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' into one category with a value of 0; the intermediate category was given value 1. Our recalculated score for the Attitude Toward Gay men scale was 2.7 and Herek's was 6.0 (on a scale from 0 to 10). On item level the percentage agreeing with the statement 'homosexual behavior between two men is just plain wrong' was 63.6 in the USA and 12.9 (with ratings of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' combined) in the Netherlands. These results are another indication of the validity of the total scale. Within the range of this article it was not possible to test the fifth hypothesis concerning the Dutch and American total scores statistically. However, the results we found strongly indicate that the Dutch score on positive affect toward lesbians and gay men is higher than the scores reported in the USA.

Herek (1988, 1994) showed the discriminant validity of the total scale and its subscales by testing them on members of lesbian and gay organizations and both supporters and opponents of a local gay rights initiative. Lastly, we also tested the discriminant validity of the total scales. By taking into consideration both the respondent's sex and the sex of the partner (if they had one), we divided the sample into two categories male-female couples (heterosexuals) and same-sex couples (lesbians and gay men). Single persons were not taken into account because we could not infer their sexual orientation from our research. We then tested whether the scale scores of the heterosexuals ($M_{\text{Total}} = 23.6$, $SD = 8.4$; $M_{\text{Lesbian}} = 11.5$, $SD = 4.4$; $M_{\text{Gay men}} = 12.1$, $SD = 4.3$) differed statistically from the scores of the lesbians and gay men ($M_{\text{Total}} = 16.0$, $SD = 7.2$; $M_{\text{Lesbian}} = 7.8$, $SD = 4.1$; $M_{\text{Gay men}} = 8.3$, $SD = 3.3$), using two independent-samples t test. There was a significant effect for sexual orientation (total scale $t_{686} = 4.6$, $p < .001$; Lesbian subscale $t_{713} = 3.9$, $p < .001$; Gay men subscale $t_{691} = 5.2$, $p < .001$), with lesbians and gay men scoring significantly lower on the total scales than heterosexual women and men. These results confirmed the discriminant validity of the total scale and its subscales, thereby also confirming Hypothesis 6.

DISCUSSION

The slightly revised and adapted Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale is a reliable and valid inventory for assessing attitudes toward lesbians and gay men in the Netherlands. All scale items loaded high on one factor. The total scale and two subscales had a high reliability (H_1). Both the construct validity (H_2 , H_3 , H_4 , and H_5) and the discriminant validity (H_6) of the scales were sufficient. These results lead us to conclude that in the Netherlands the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale is a psychometrically sound inventory.

As noted by Herek (1994) the items of the scale may, in time, need to be adapted. For the Dutch context, it may be useful to use more sensitive (less strong) items, as the distribution was very skewed. For the Netherlands, we recommend the use of the total scale and the subscales to assess attitudes toward lesbians and gay men to conduct research into the correlates and consequences of negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men and the possible differences between attitudes toward the two groups separately.

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